

**HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE MEETING
APRIL 14, 2008**

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Yale Cantor called the meeting to order at 6:30 P.M.

PRESENT: Yale Cantor, Hassan Salley, Helen Filloramo, Susanne Hannigan, Anne Nickerson,

OTHERS PRESENT: Deb Stauffer, Diane Lasher-Penti.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Motioned (S. Hannigan), Seconded (H. Salley) and passed by those present to approve the minutes of March 10, 2008 with the following correction: third grant is for \$40,000 from the State Department of Education and a clarification that student fees total \$25-30,000 in addition to the \$90,000 grant.

ANNOUNCEMENT: D. Crayton, Director of Human Services is expected to return to work the first week in May.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT: Reviewed by members, Y. Cantor added that the Finance Board budget hearing was sparsely attended and the budget was positively received.

PRESENTATION: Diane Lasher-Penti, Youth Services Director spoke to the Commission about current programs beginning with small groups as such the "In Between Group" for sixth graders which is going well. 15 high schools students will be hired as tutors for the 5th and 6th graders next year. In- school programs that begin in Kindergarten and run through the sixth grade focus on building self-esteem, and resolving issues that center around conflict resolution and anti-bullying. These programs build on each other so that by the time the child enters middle school he/she has the necessary tools to recognize and deal effectively with peer pressure and other teen issues. The "Zone" the after school program for middle school has been very successful. With an enrollment of 145 students, the program has been very well received by students and their parents.

Youth Services has partnered with Stafford Family Services to offer the "Strengthening Families Program starting May 8th. This program is used to improve communication between youth and their parents. In this evening program youth and parents meet Separately and together to discuss youth and parenting issues with an emphasis on better communication. This is another short-term, small group program sponsored by youth services.

In addition to small groups and in-school programs, youth services is working with a computer company to create an interactive web page for youth with resources available

to both youth and parents. A graphic artist has been working with staff to create marketing materials, especially a youth services card with a logo that will appeal to students.

At the end of the presentation, Ms Lasher-Penti was asked about families in need of counseling who could not afford the standard fee. Ms Lasher-Penti responded that Fees can be reduced or waived for those families. There are 10 active counseling cases. Youth services is a participant in Manchester Hospital's "warm line" emergency program for youth and their families seeking information on how to handle issues before become out of control or require hospitalization. This 24-hour telephone service is staffed by Manchester Hospital mental health providers.

PRESENTATION: Deb Stauffer, Prevention Coordinator reviewed the Strategic Prevention State Incentive Grant. Ellington was one of 27 towns awarded a grant. The town received \$255,000 for a three year period—that's \$85,000 per year. Ms. Stauffer has completed an assessment of town underage drinking using data from a high school survey conducted by ERASE. The survey noted an increase in binge drinking which parallels the national trend. The strategic plan will look at 5 risk factors: family norms, peer pressure, low law enforcement, low perception of harm by youth, and social access. Ms Stauffer has initiated the following programs to counteract these risk factors: set up media campaign and formed two community groups to help increase awareness about underage drinking. These groups are the Parent Connection and the student group, Rise Above. Rise Above sponsored a dodge ball tournament with 300 middle school students attending. Ms. Stauffer received a \$500 stipend to have a town hall meeting where topics included how marketing affects youth, the impact of overdosing, new legal changes for parents with kids drinking in their homes. Grant funds were also used to hire extra roving patrols and to re-vamp the health class curriculum. During the spring a community meeting was held with faith and community leaders to discuss underage drinking. Radio station 93.7 will begin "shout outs" in April. These will be short announcements on data about underage drinking. In the future Ms. Stauffer would like to convene a youth summit. In the spring of 2009 a formal evaluation will be conducted for 6th -12 graders to evaluate the impact of the programs initiated by the grant using the 1196 study as the baseline.

NEW BUSINESS: None

ADJOURNMENT: Motioned (H. Salley), Seconded (H. Filloramo) and passed by all those present to adjourn at 7:35 P.M.

Submitted by,

Susanne Hannigan
For
Doris Crayton